

Minneapolis Community Development Agency

## Request for City Council Action

Date: March 25, 2002

To: Council Member Lisa Goodman, Community Development Committee  
Council Member Barbara Johnson, Ways and Means/Budget Committee  
Refer to: MCDA Board of Commissioners

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Approved by: Charles T. Lutz, MCDA Interim Executive Director \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject: Chicago Plaza -- Authorization to Accept Planning Grants for Plaza Design and Preparation of Interpretive Plan; Related Budget Appropriation**

**Previous Directives:** The approved 2001 Minneapolis Capital Bonding Program budget included \$300,000 in funding for access features on the proposed Chicago plaza to be built within the Chicago Avenue right-of-way between Second Street and West River Parkway. On March 23, 2001, the MCDA Board approved the hiring of a consultant to complete an archaeological study for the Guthrie Site. On May 18, 2001, the City Council and MCDA Board approved execution of a redevelopment contract with the Guthrie Theater Foundation that provides for construction of the Chicago plaza. On September 14, 2001, the City Council approved an *Update to the Historic Mills District Plan*, which includes the proposed plaza at Chicago Avenue. On November 9, 2001, the City Council approved acceptance of a grant from the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board to assist with design of the Chicago plaza.

**Ward:** Two

**Neighborhood Group Notification:** Not applicable.

**Consistency with *Building a City That Works*:** Interpretive features within the proposed Chicago plaza will achieve Goal 4.D. – Support development efforts that enhance unique urban institutions, features and amenities.

**Comprehensive Plan Compliance:** Not applicable.

**Zoning Code Compliance:** Not applicable.

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**Impact on MCDA Budget:** (Check those that apply)

- ☐ No financial impact
- ☒ Action requires an appropriation increase to the MCDA Budget
- ☒ Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase
- ☐ Action requires use of contingency or reserves
- ☐ Other financial impact (Explain):

**Living Wage / Business Subsidy:** Not applicable.

**Job Linkage:** Not applicable.

**Affirmative Action Compliance:** The selected consultants will be required to comply with applicable provisions.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**City Council Recommendation:** The Interim Executive Director recommends that the City Council: 1) authorize acceptance of a \$15,000 grant from the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board to the MCDA for preparation of a Chicago plaza interpretive plan; 2) authorize the acceptance of an additional \$14,000 grant from the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board to the MCDA for design of the Chicago plaza, increasing the previously-approved grant from \$20,000 to \$34,000; 3) amend the MCDA 2002 Appropriation Resolution to increase the appropriation in Fund SMN (State and Other Grants) by \$29,000 and increase the revenue estimate for Fund SMN revenue (3215-14 Other grant revenues) by \$29,000; and 4) forward this report to the MCDA Board of Commissioners for consideration of the following.

**MCDA Board Recommendation:** The Interim Executive Director recommends that the MCDA Board of Commissioners authorize the Interim Executive Director (or his designee) to enter into: 1) a grant agreement with the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board related to the preparation of an interpretive plan for the Chicago plaza, and 2) an amendment to an existing grant agreement with the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board related to design of the Chicago plaza.

**Background/Supporting Information**

A public plaza is being planned at Chicago Avenue between the Guthrie and Mill City Museum to provide pedestrian and bike access to the Museum, the Guthrie and the Riverfront. The plaza will be designed to complement these surrounding amenities and also would be an appropriate location for interpretive materials that would enliven the plaza and explain the site's history to plaza visitors. This plaza, as well as the Guthrie's adjacent open spaces, will be designed in 2002, and it is timely to concurrently consider interpretive opportunities that could be incorporated into the design. Certain functional parts of the plaza will be completed in early spring of 2003 in order to provide access to the Mill City Museum, Stone Arch Plaza office space above the Museum and Humboldt Lofts. The remainder of the plaza, as well as the site improvements around the Guthrie, are expected to be completed in late 2004.

An archaeological study of the proposed Guthrie site (bounded by Second Street South and West River Parkway, Chicago and 11<sup>th</sup> avenues) that was completed in 2001 uncovered information about the buildings and activities that had been located on the site at various times during its history. Many of these historical activities related to rail facilities that served the milling district and general area. While none of the archaeological remnants were eventually determined to be significant, interpretation of the site's history would add to visitors' understanding of the area. Previous uses included a small depot, a locomotive maintenance facility and roundhouse, lumber storage, warehouses, early residential/commercial uses, and the two large General Mills elevators that existed until recently.

Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH) is on an MCDA consultant panel and has been selected by the MCDA to design the Chicago plaza. Hess Roise & Company, a historical consultant also on one of the MCDA's consultant panels, has been selected to complete an interpretive plan for the Chicago plaza. The interpretive plan study will be coordinated with the design of the Chicago plaza, so that input about interpretive options can inform the plaza design and vice versa.

### **St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board Planning Grant**

The St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board (SAFHB) is a joint powers board created by the State of Minnesota in 1988 and chaired by the Director of the Minnesota Historical Society. The Board includes the Minneapolis Mayor and two Council Members, as well as representatives of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Hennepin County, State of Minnesota and other entities. The SAFHB's mission is to plan for, encourage and coordinate interpretation of the historical significance of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Zone, located along the Minneapolis central riverfront near downtown. One of the ways it achieves this mission is via planning grants to member agencies to complete projects that are within the SAFHB's work plan.

In 2001, the SAFHB recognized the importance of the Chicago plaza as a public space linking several major features and approved a planning grant of \$20,000 to the MCDA to assist with plaza design. At its first meeting in 2002, the SAFHB approved two additional planning grants to the MCDA. The existing \$20,000 plaza design grant was amended by adding \$14,000 to the original grant of \$20,000. The grant amendment was requested to allow SEH to more fully coordinate the design with the adjacent projects (e.g., West River Parkway, Mill City Museum, Humboldt Lofts and the Guthrie Theater). The SAFHB also approved a \$15,000 planning grant to complete the proposed interpretive plan for the Chicago plaza. This report recommends that the Minneapolis City Council accept these two SAFHB planning grants and appropriate the funds and that the MCDA be authorized to execute the grant agreement and grant amendment with the SAFHB.